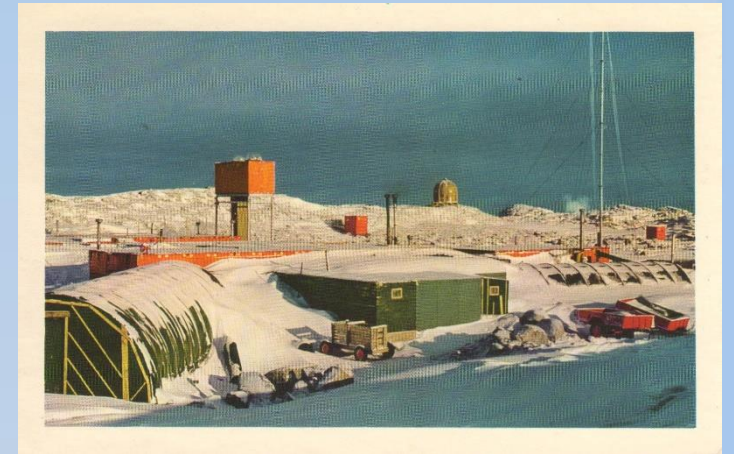
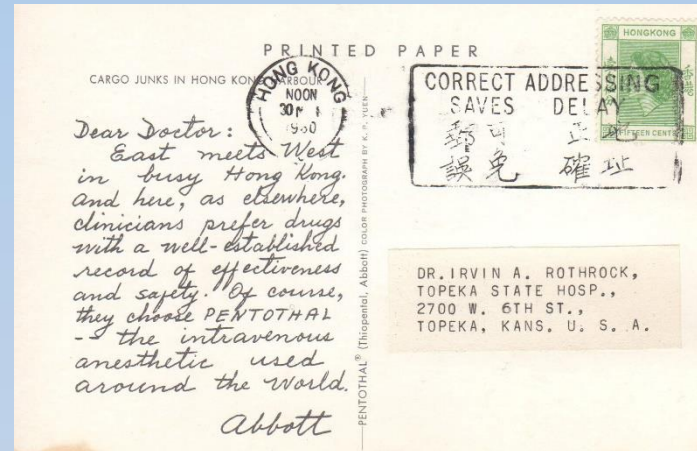


Fun with Abbott Labs Dear Doctor Postcards



By Tom Fortunato

A 2020 presentation for the Rochester Philatelic Association

See more about them at <http://www.deardoctormapostcards.com>

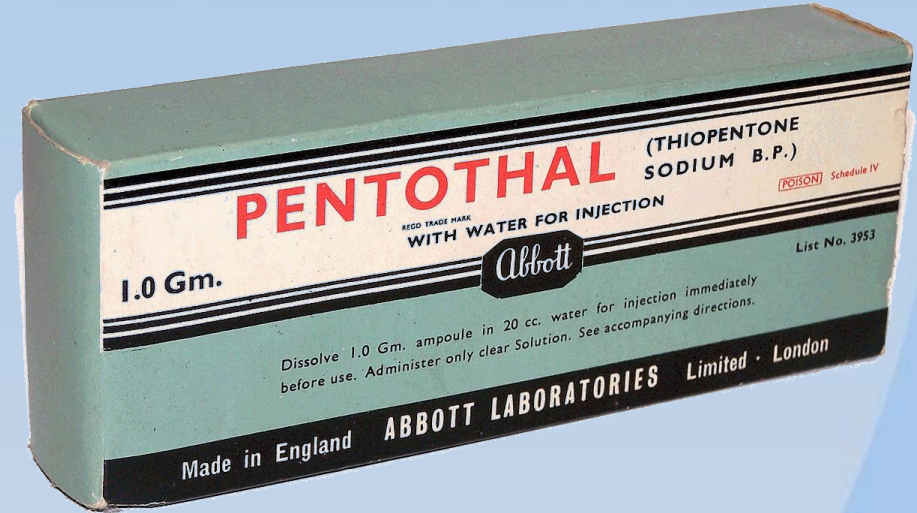


You may have seen these postcards before in dealers boxes and wondered what they were. Commonly called “Dear Doctor” postcards they were sent out by drug manufacturers to doctors and medical personnel advertising specific drugs. Each was mailed from an exotic locale with an interesting native scene on the front and the sales pitch on the reverse, typically starting with the salutation “Dear Doctor,” hence their nickname. Abbott Labs headquartered in Chicago, Illinois sent theirs out between 1956 and 1968. Over 180 face-different postcards in 10 languages and sent to 36 countries and territories have been documented to date with subtle and not-so-subtle differences found on the message side. They’re now over 50 years old!

This presentation will introduce you to the wealth of variety among them. Plan to have fun!



All Abbott postcard mailings advertised one barbiturate drug, trademarked “Pentothal,” their brand name for thiopental sodium. It was widely used as an anesthetic injection used to put pre-op patients to sleep. It may be more familiar as “truth serum” to the spy-era generation of the 1950s and 1960s.



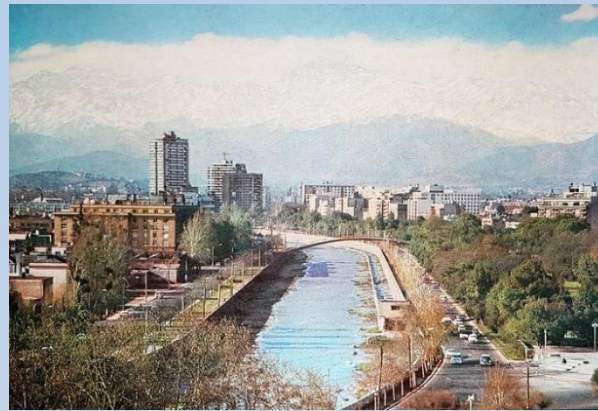
Each Abbott postcard mailing was sent to as many as 250,000 recipients. Most were trashed as junk mail, while others kept them as curiosities--thankfully!



Let's first look at a postcard's deltiological differences. All mailings used native cards originally printed in their country of use. Here's an example of a card used from Chile showing Rio Mapocho in the capital of Santiago. Abbott printed their own message and other details over these. That included the postcard's left half and sometimes the text in the center vertical section, as you can see on the card on the right.



original back, used



common front



Abbott back

Abbott's overprinting is the source of Dear Doctor card non-philatelic differences and varieties.



Native sealers from Greenland,
picture from the Greenland film "QIVITOO"
taken by Nordisk Film Ko.

Dear Doctor:

In vast and sparsely
populated Greenland
you'll find PENTOTHAL
in use, as it is wherever
modern medicine is
practiced. There is no
safer, more effective and
versatile intravenous
anesthetic the world over.

PENTOTHAL® SODIUM
[Thiopental Sodium for Injection, Abbott]

Abbott



DR. ORLANDO CABRERA,
2700 W. 6TH ST.,
TOPEKA, KANS.
U. S. A.

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DR. IRA A. ROWLSON,
100 BEEKMAN ST.,
PLATTSBURG, N. Y.,
U. S. A.

20-

We're going to start out with an easy one. Look closely at these two cards. Other than the person each is addressed to, what's different about them?



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PLATTSBURG, N. Y.,
U. S. A.

20-

Absolutely nothing! The complete mailing of these cards from Greenland was accomplished on only one day using the same stamp and postmark.



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picture from the Greenland film "QIVITOO"
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(Thiopental Sodium for Injection, Abbott)

Abbott



MRS. MILDRED M. STODDARD
P. O. BOX 375
GROVETOWN, GA.
U. S. A.

Same card on the left, different card on the right. Any difference between these two?



Native sealers from Greenland,
picture from the Greenland film "QIVITOO"
taken by Nordisk Film Ko.

Dear Doctor:

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MRS. MILDRED M. STODDARD
P. O. BOX 375
GROVETOWN, GA.
U. S. A.

The written message is the same and in the same handwriting, but spaced differently. The right card is missing "Dear Doctor" and was sent to a nurse. "Nurse" was used on later mailings.



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picture from the Greenland film "QIVITOO"
taken by Nordisk Film Ko.

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Trade Mark
(Thiopental Sodium for Injection, Abbott)

Abbott



DR. A. R. WOODS,
269 KING ST.,
DUNDAS, ONT.
CANADA

Same card on the left, different card on the right. What's the difference?



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Trade Mark
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DR. A. R. WOODS,
269 KING ST.,
DUNDAS, ONT.
CANADA

The right card was sent to Canada, and yes,
Canada is spelled wrong! None the less it
arrived at its destination. There's one more
difference between these. Did you catch it?



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picture from the Greenland film "QIVITOO"
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DR. A. R. WOODS,
269 KING ST.,
DUNDAS, ONT.
CANADA

PENTOTHAL SODIUM
 Trade Mark
(Thiopental Sodium for Injection, Abbott)

“Trade Mark” was added under the drug name
on the card sent to Canada.



Native sealers from Greenland,
picture from the Greenland film "QIVITOO"
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Trade Mark
(Thiopental Sodium for Injection, Abbott)

Abbott



DR. A. R. WOODS,
269 KING ST.,
DUNDAS, ONT.
CANADA

500

Native sealers from Greenland,
picture from the Greenland film "QIVITOO"
taken by Nordisk Film Ko.

ease advise your correspondants
of your correct postal address.
Prière de donner à vos correspondants
votre adresse postale exacte.

Cher Docteur,
Même au Grönland,
immense et à population
clairsemée, le PENTOTHAL
est utilisé, comme partout
où l'on pratique une théra-
peutique moderne. Il n'y
a pas au monde d'anes-
thésique intraveineux plus
sûr, plus efficace ni plus
varié dans ses indications.

PENTOTHAL SODIQUE
Marque déposée
(Thiopental Sodique Injectable, Abbott)

Abbott



DR. ROLAND DESMARAIS,
21 RUE LEBLANC,
QTE. L'ASSOMPTION, QUE.
CANADA.

Epiphonie



Here's an easy one, both mailed to Canada.
What's the difference?

Native sealers from Greenland,
picture from the Greenland film "QIVITOO"
taken by Nordisk Film Ko.

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Trade Mark
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Abbott



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Marque déposée
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Abbott



DR. ROLAND DESMARAIS,
21 RUE LEBLANC,
QTE. L'ASSOMPTION, QUE.
CANADA.

Epiphonie

8

Parles vous français? Even if you don't read French, the recipient of the right postcard was expected to. The doctor had also moved!



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DR. ORLANDO CABRERA,
2700 W. 6TH ST.,
TOPEKA, KANS.
U. S. A.

Native sealers from Greenland,
picture from the Greenland film "QIVITOO"
taken by Nordisk Film Ko.

Estimado Doctor:

En la vasta y poco
poblada Groenlandia tam-
bién hallará Ud. que se
usa el PENTOTHAL, como en
todas partes en que se
practica la medicina
moderna. No existe en el
mundo un anestésico intra-
venoso más seguro, más efi-
caz, ni de más aplicaciones.

PENTOTHAL SÓDICO
(Thiopental Sódico Inyectable, Abbott)

Abbott



DDS. AUGUSTO FALCONI
JIRON UNION NO. 1050
LIMA
PERU

Perhaps you prefer Spanish, as in this example
to Peru? Other postcards from this mailing are
known to have been sent to Argentina, Belgium,
the Belgian Congo, Germany, Italy, and Sweden.



Dear Doctor:

City names like Saarbrücken and Saarouis reflect the Saarland's Franco-German history. Of all the areas of Europe, it's probably had the swiftest recovery from World War II. Medical practice is advanced, and of course, doctors are using PENTOTHAL. Sureness and safety have made it the intravenous anesthetic of choice throughout the world.

Abbott

PENTOTHAL® (Thiopental, Abbott)

DR. BARRY J. HERMAN,
VET. ADMIN. HOSP.
BUFFALO 15, N. Y.
U. S. A.



Dear Doctor:

City names like Saarbrücken and Saarouis reflect the Saarland's Franco-German history. Of all the areas of Europe, it's probably had the swiftest recovery from World War II. Medical practice is advanced, and of course, doctors are using PENTOTHAL. Sureness and safety have made it the intravenous anesthetic of choice throughout the world.

Abbott

PENTOTHAL® (Thiopental, Abbott)

DR. JAMES W. TICE
MEDICAL ARTS BLDG.,
1 YOUNG ST.,
HAMILTON, ONT., CANADA.



2.00

Can you spot what's different between these two cards, one to the US and one to Canada, other than the text of one appearing darker than the other?



Dear Doctor:

City names like Saarbrücken and Saarouis reflect the Saarland's Franco-German history. Of all the areas of Europe, it's probably had the swiftest recovery from World War II. Medical practice is advanced, and of course, doctors are using PENTOTHAL. Sureness and safety have made it the intravenous anesthetic of choice throughout the world.

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Abbott



PENTOTHAL (Thiopental, Abbott)
TRADE MARK

DR. JAMES W. TICE
MEDICAL ARTS BLDG.,
1 YOUNG ST.,
HAMILTON, ONT., CANADA.

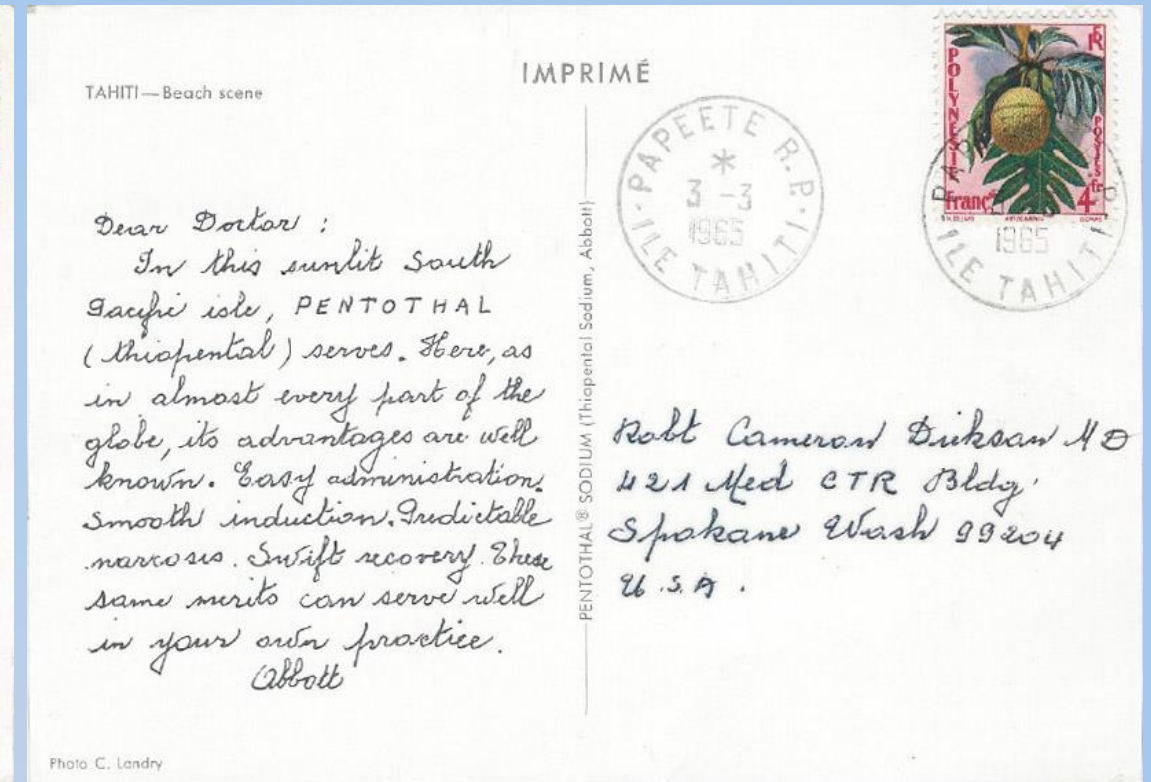
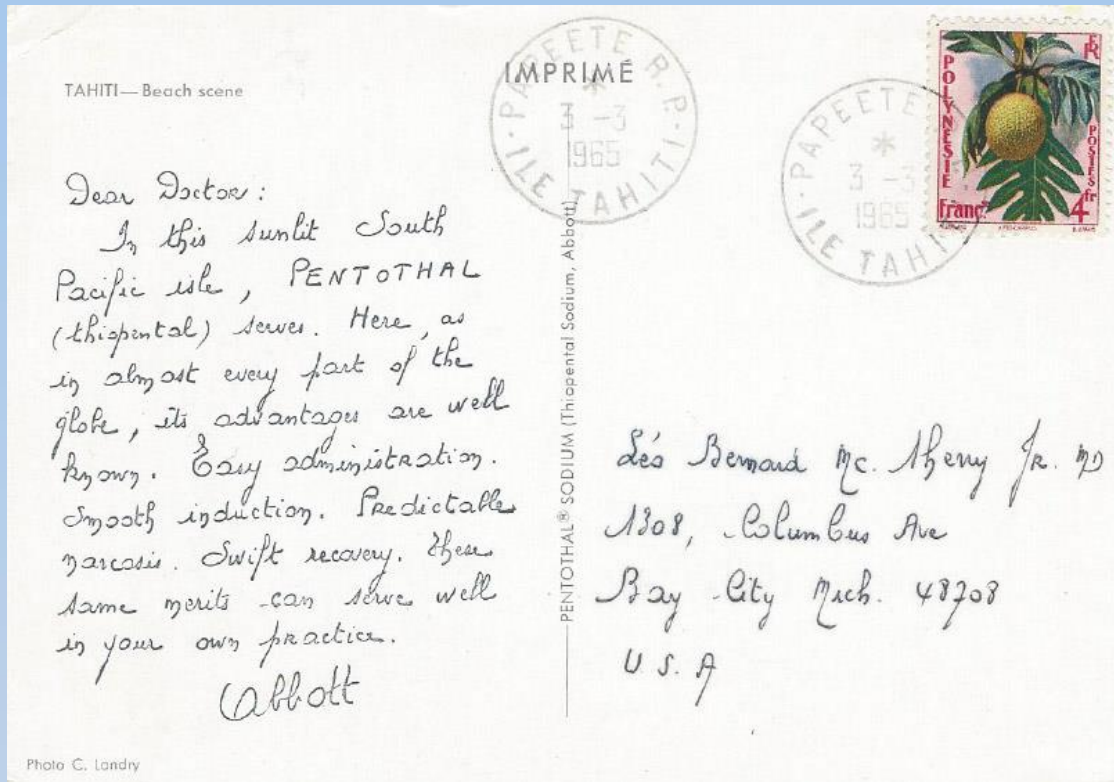
2.00

PENTOTHAL® (Thiopental, Abbott)

PENTOTHAL (Thiopental, Abbott)
TRADE MARK

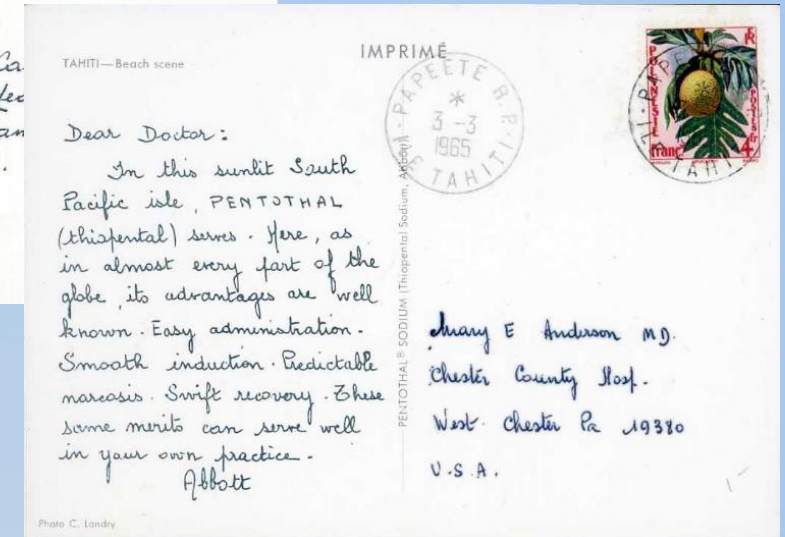
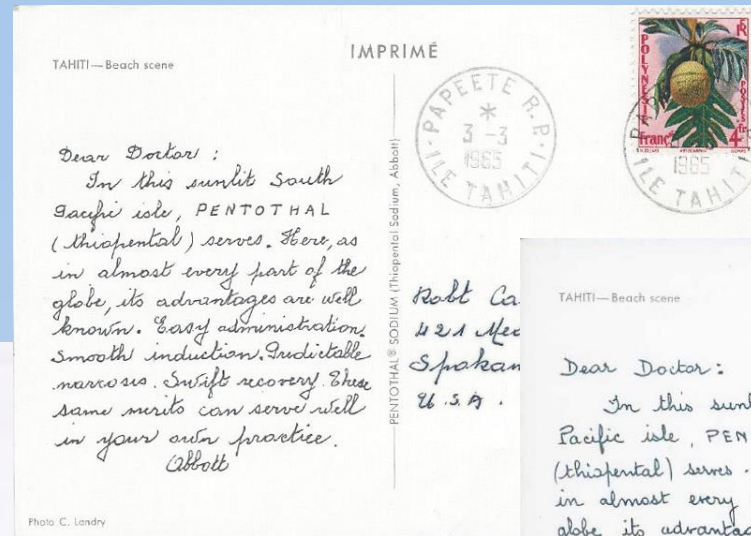
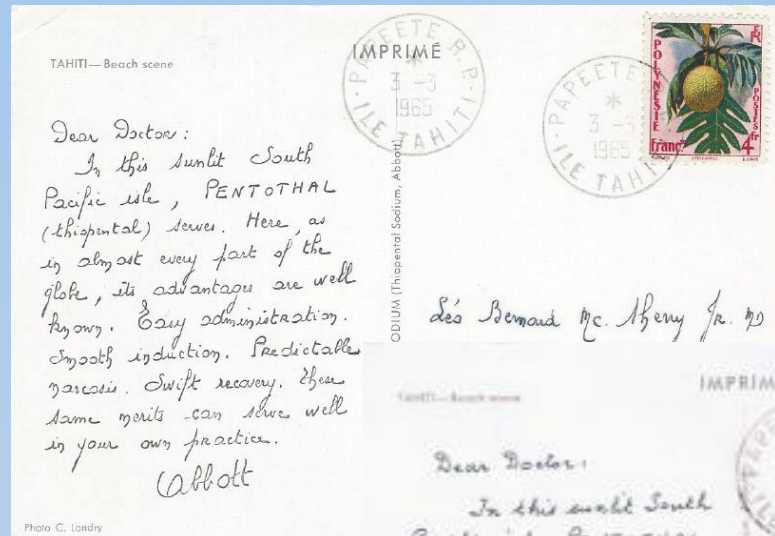
Again, there is a difference showing a registered mark on the US card and "Trade Mark" text on the Canadian card, but now on the vertical dividing line.



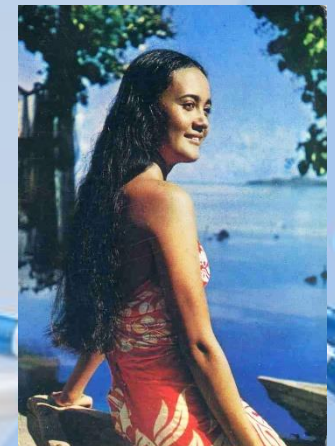


This mailing was sent from the warmer climate of French Polynesia and the island of Tahiti. What's the difference?





You're right if you noticed a difference in message "handwriting." In fact, four are known. This part of each card was printed, not handwritten! Addresses appear mimeographed on, also in different "fonts."





Both of these cards from Florence, Italy were sent to Canada, one in English, one in French. But why is one message in script and the other typed? Not sure. The French text goes into a bit more detail.



Pay attention to the center dividing line on the message side. In some cases you will find a small letter at the bottom of it that relates to the language of the card. With a very few exceptions here they are...

A = English text to doctors or hospitals in USA

B = English text to doctors in Canada

C = English text (no salutation) to nurse-anesthetists in USA

D = French text

E = Dutch text

F = Greek text or German text

G = Italian text, Spanish text, or Portuguese text

H = Spanish text

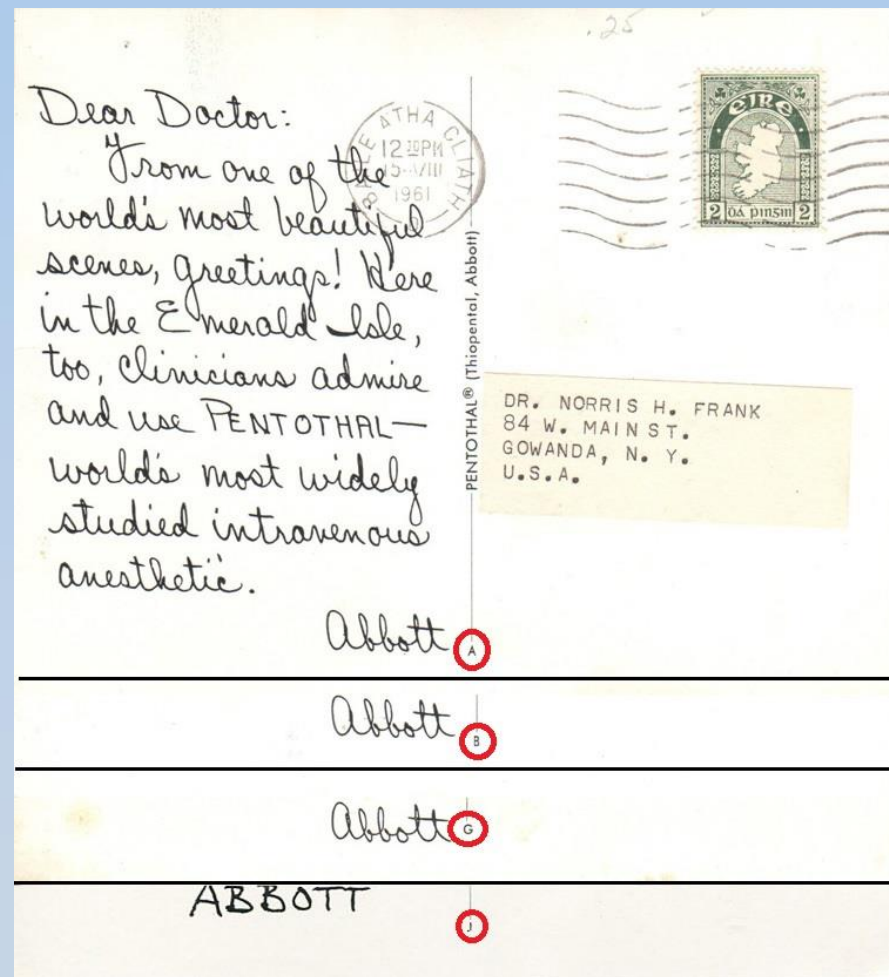
I = not recorded/reported

J = Swedish text

K = Swedish text

S = Swedish text

as compiled by Roger Cichorz of Boulder, Colorado

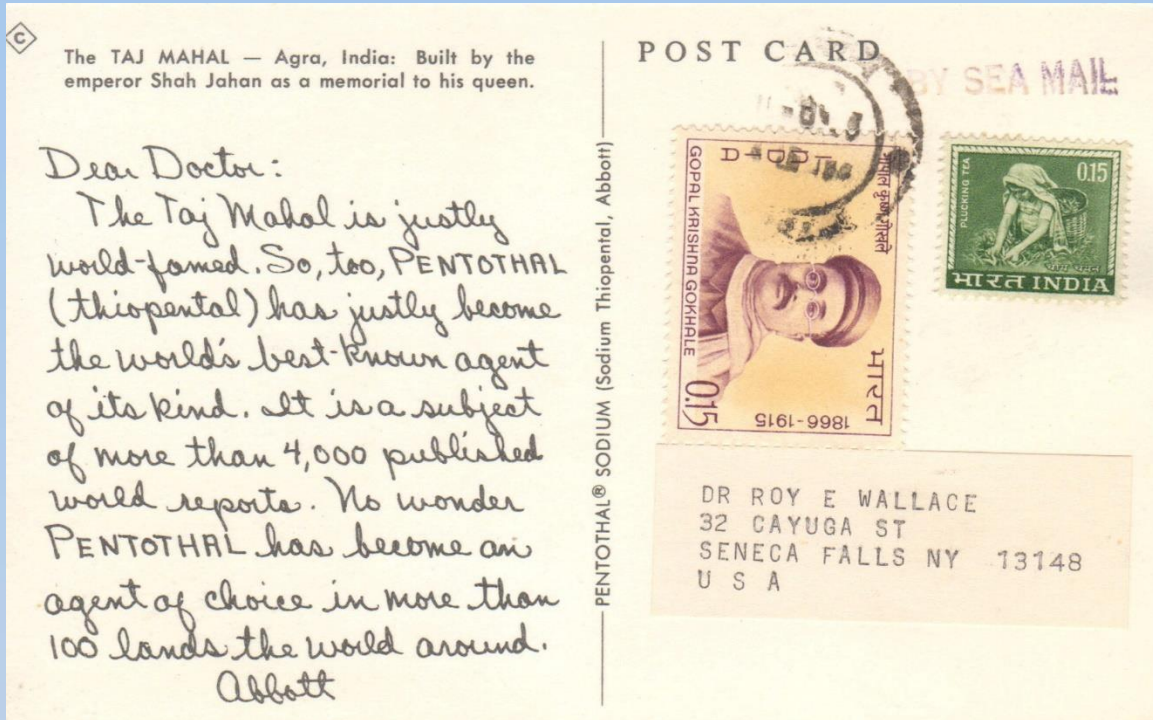


If you've been paying attention so far, you'll remember to look for the following that may differentiate one card from another based on deltiological aspects...

- ➡ Salutation present or missing
- ➡ Language of the message
- ➡ Message "handwritten" or typed
- ➡ Address label used or printed directly on the card
- ➡ Image found on the picture side of the card

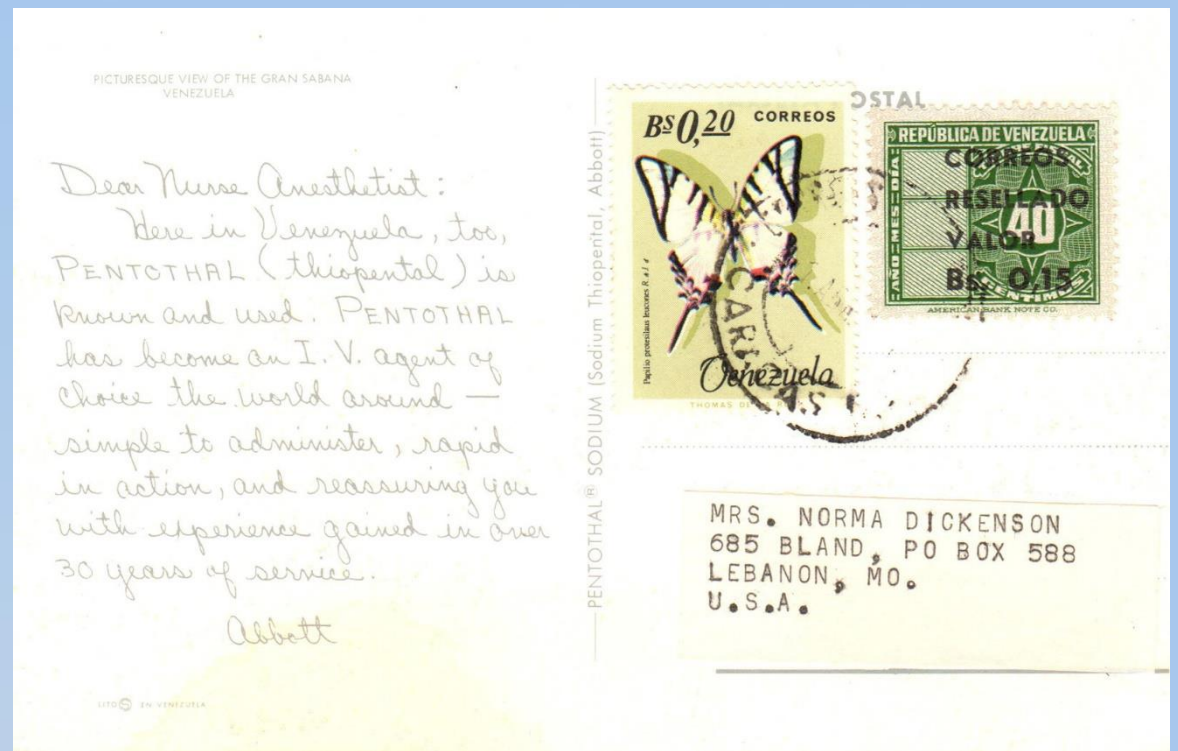
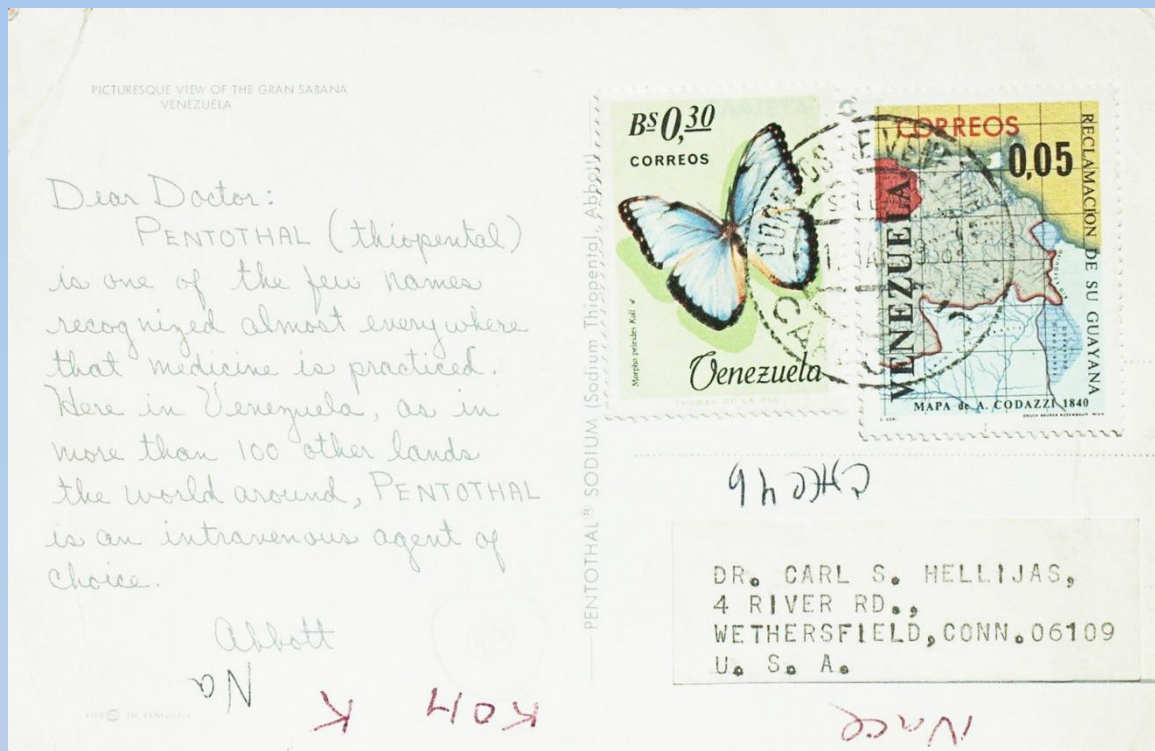
But there are plenty more philatelic varieties to look for among Dear Doctor postcards! Philatelists, there is real postal history here!



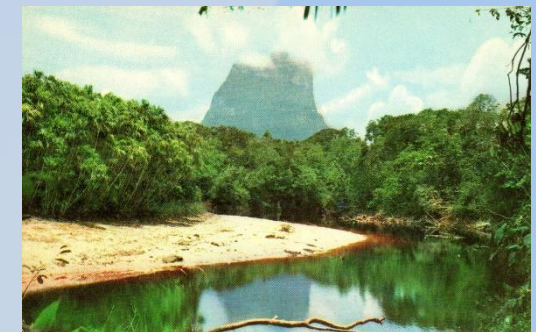


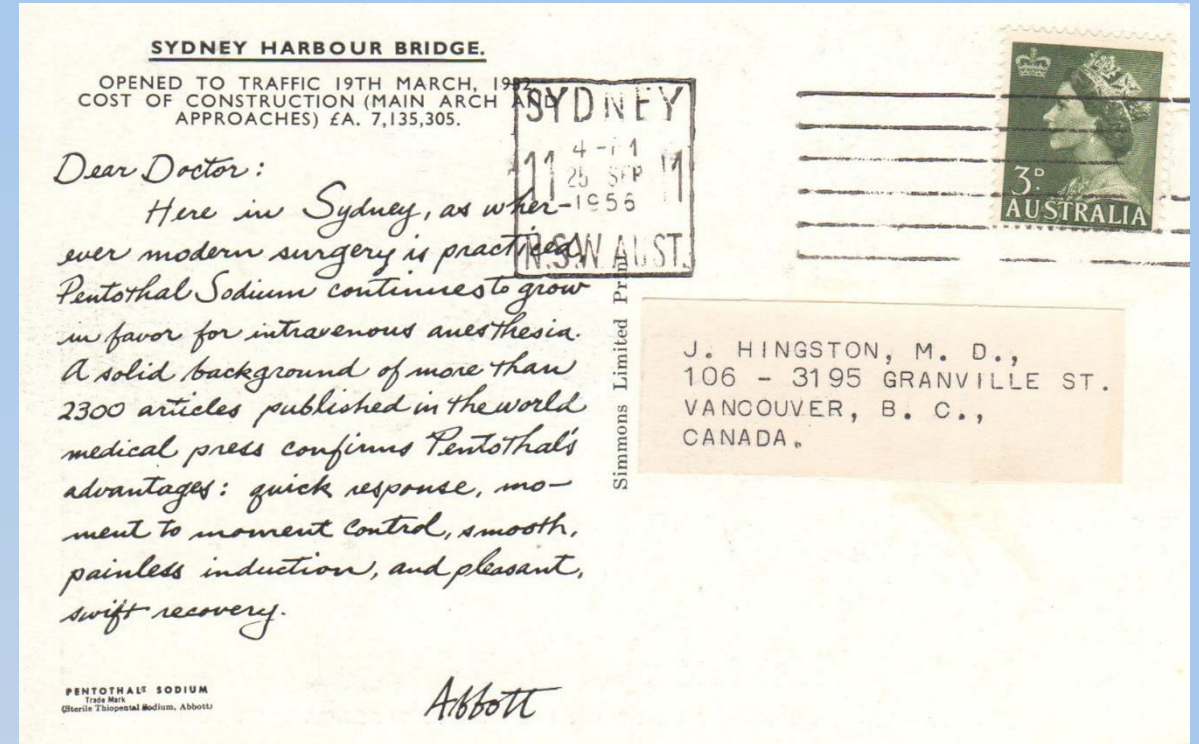
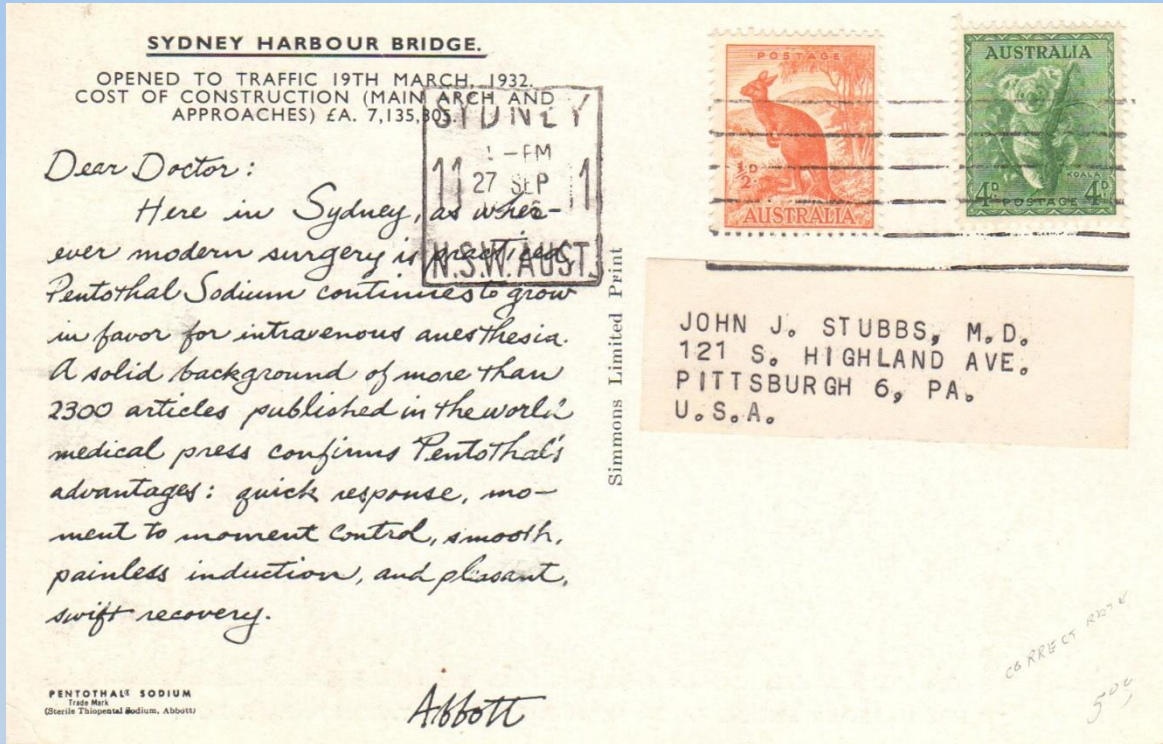
Although only postcards sent from India were endorsed “BY SEA MAIL,” all Dear Doctor postcard mailings were sent at the surface rate, the least expensive method of posting to reduce costs.



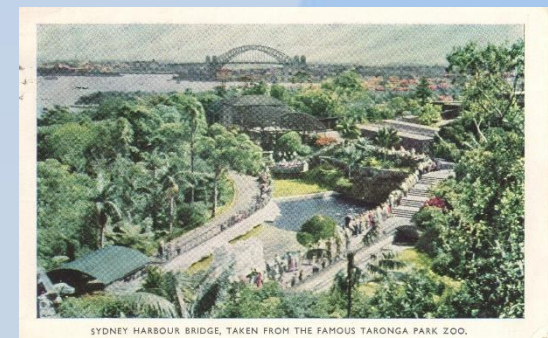


Sometimes different stamps were used bearing the same postage total going to the same country, as shown here. Also note the use of the “Dear Nurse Anesthetist” salutation on this 1966 mailing instead of being absent on pre-1964 mailings. There was a different message to doctors versus nurses.



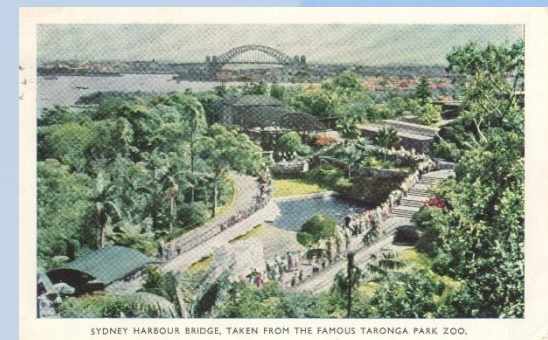


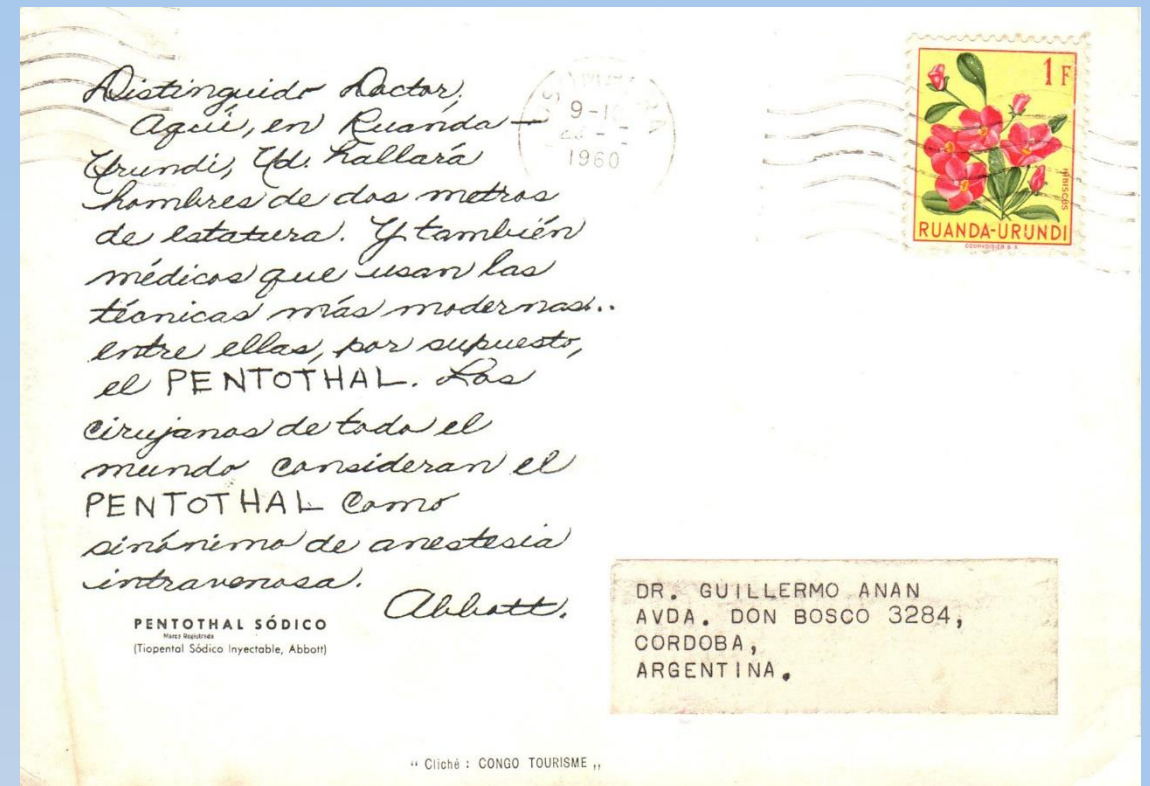
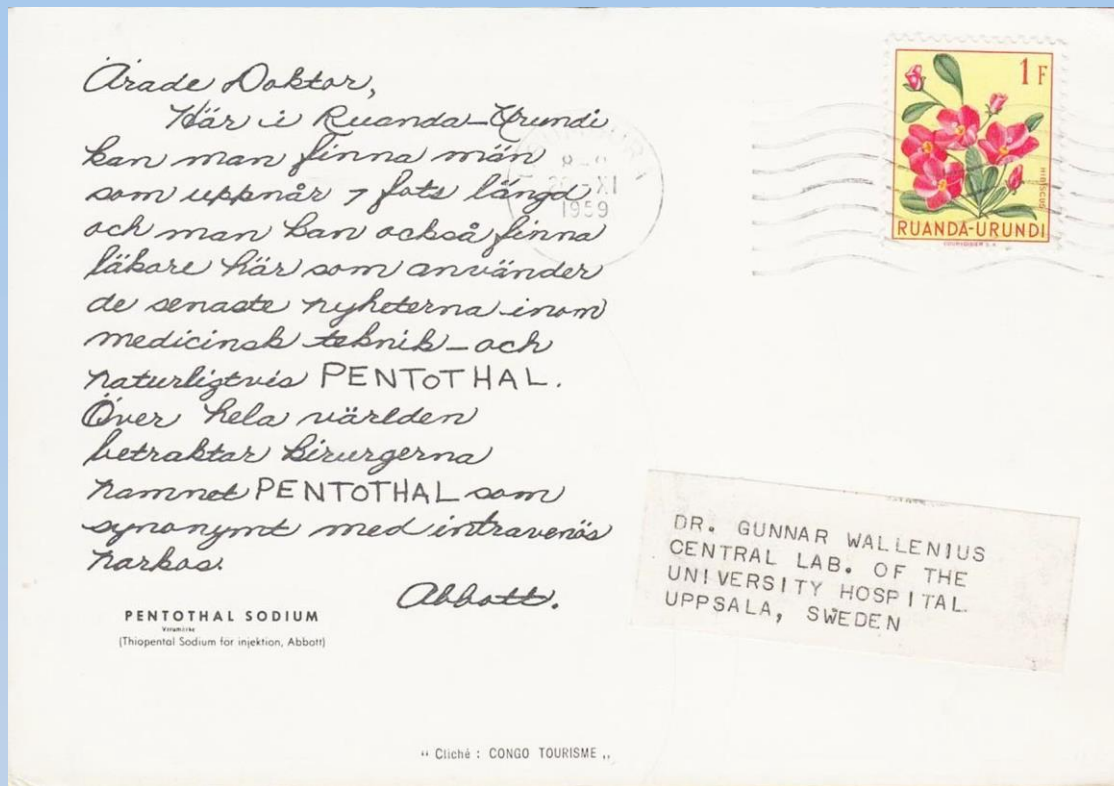
Look closely. Why might the left postcard have 4½d postage from Australia while the one on the left have only 3d?



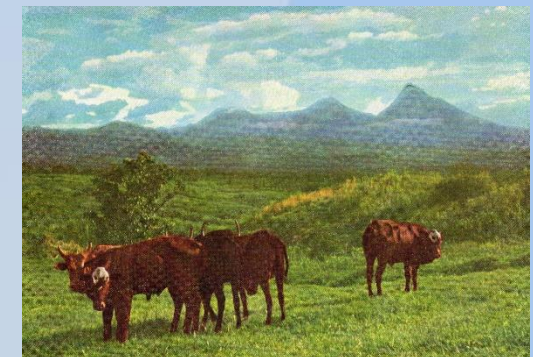


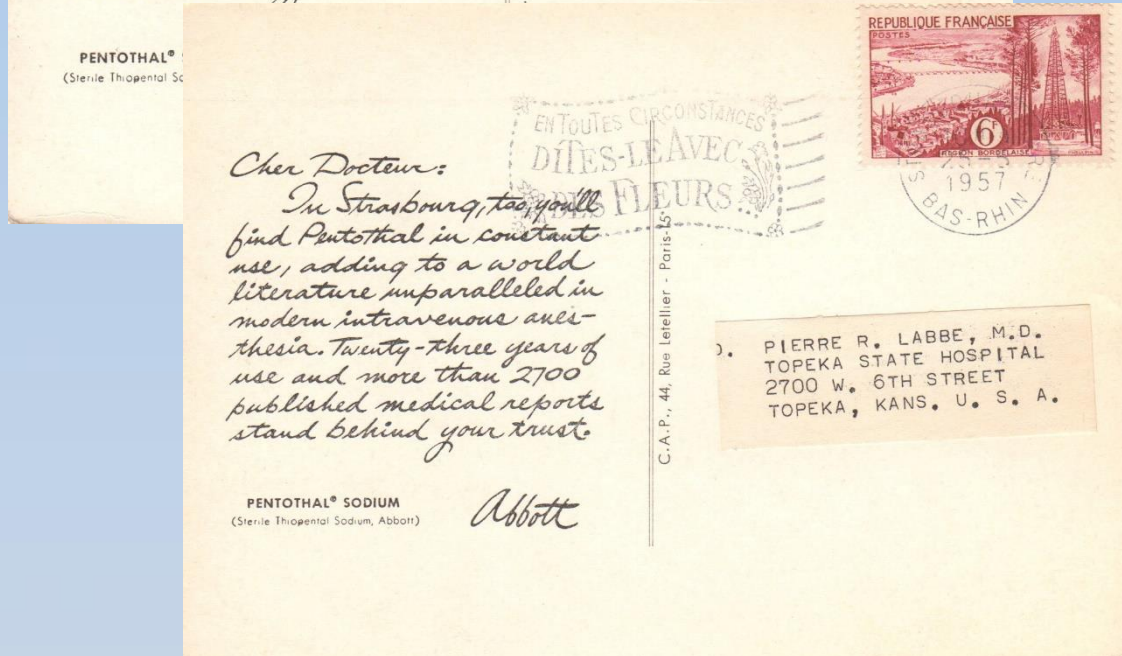
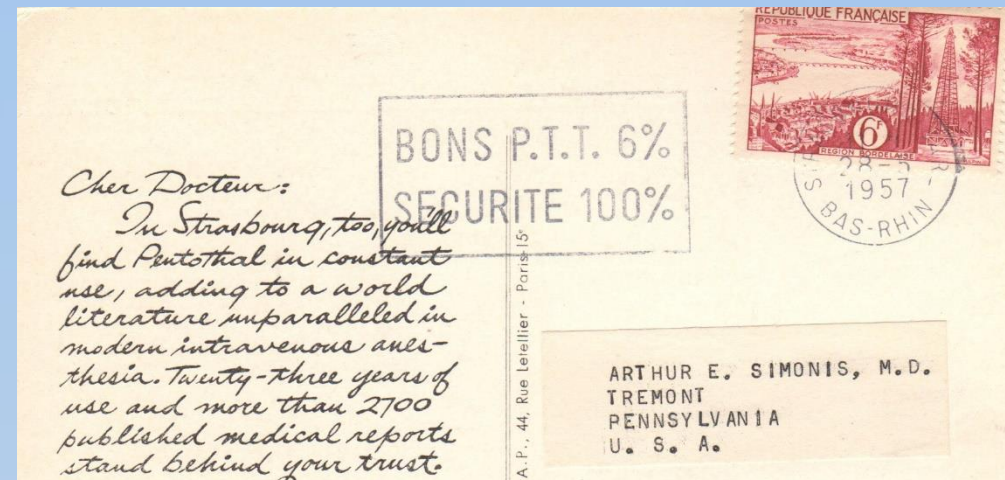
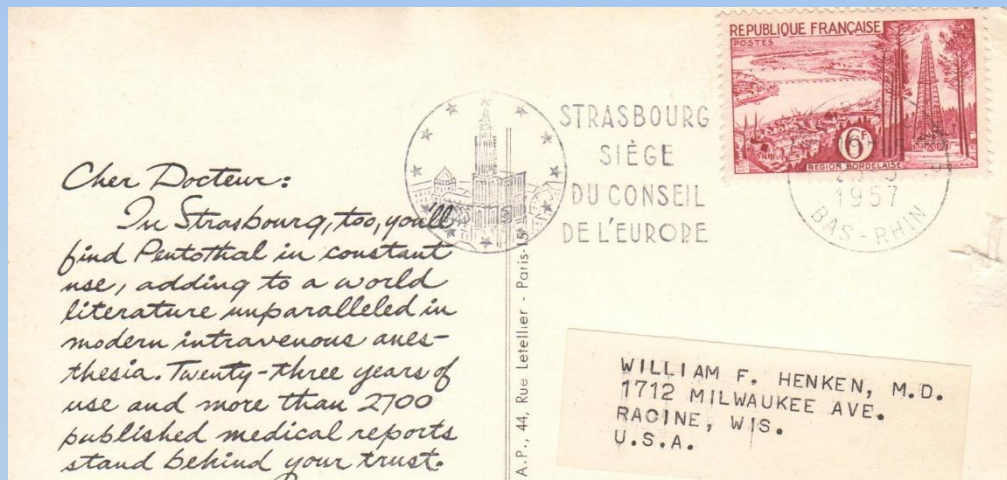
As part of the British Commonwealth, mail from Australia to Canada was able to travel at a reduced rate, in this case at a 33% discount from the US rate. Most Abbott mailings took place over several days rather than just a single day like this one.





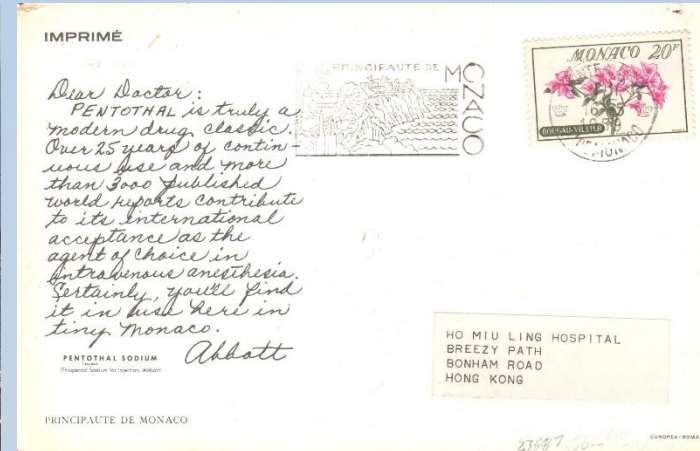
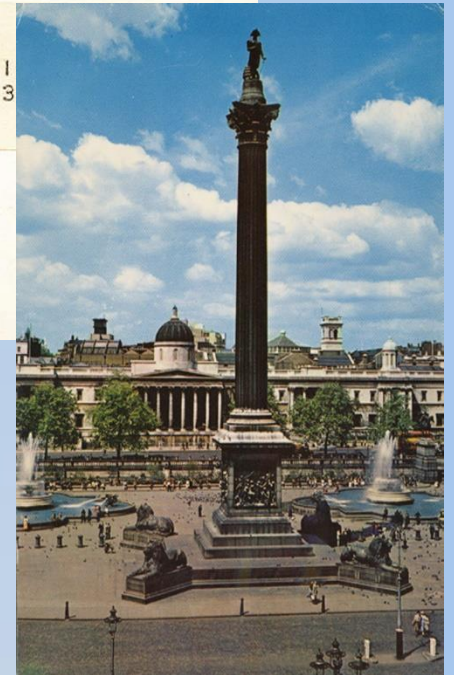
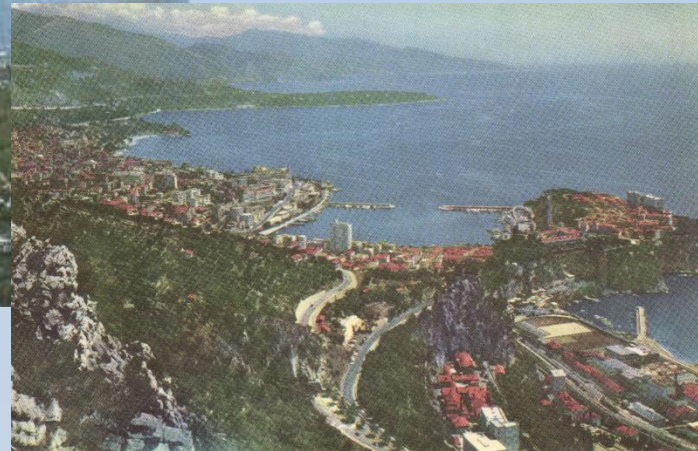
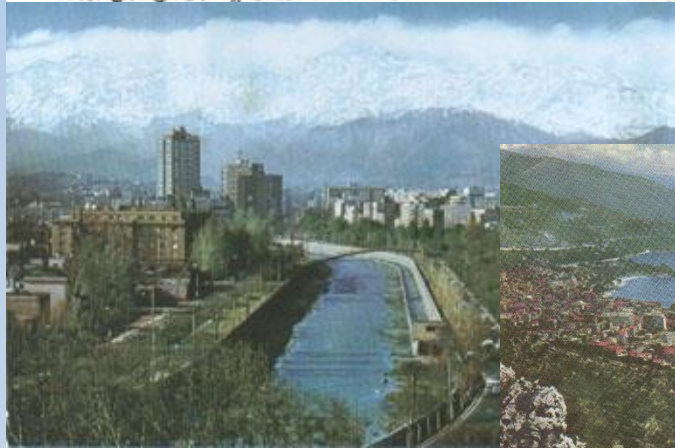
Are you up for a challenge? Specialize in one of the Abbott mailings that took place over an extended time. Mailings from Ruanda-Urundi are recorded as posted between July 17, 1959 to October 9, 1960.





Postmark collectors will find a wealth of varieties.





First day cover collectors will find material, too!

Dear Doctor,

Newfoundland — gateway to Eastern Canada. 30 years ago a new intravenous anaesthetic stood on the threshold of medicine: Pentothal (thiopental). Since then it has successfully been used by doctors across Canada and around the globe. Pentothal will be of great benefit to patients in your own hospital.



Dr. Wilfred G. Reive,
178 Claremont Ave.,
Kitchener, Ont.



Dear Doctor:

Here in Quebec, just as wherever modern surgery is practiced, Pentothal Sodium has been the subject of an impressive series of reports in the medical press. World wide, more than 2300 articles have been published on intravenous anesthesia with Pentothal since Abbott introduced the drug in 1934. On this solid clinical background rests a growing appreciation of Pentothal's advantages.

PENTOTHAL SODIUM
(Sterile Thiopental Sodium, Abbott)

Abbott



RICHARD T. SHUGART, M.D.,
OFFICERS MAIL SECTION
FITZSIMONS ARMY HOSPITAL
DENVER 8, COLO. U.S.A.

Bob
Elkins

ESCLUSAS DE MIRAFLORES
MIRAFLORES LOCKS

Cher Docteur,
Il n'y a pas, dans le monde entier, d'anesthésique intraveineux plus sûr ni plus efficace que le Pentothal Sodique. Vous le trouverez à Panama, carrefour international comme partout où se pratique la chirurgie moderne.

PENTOTHAL SODIQUE
(Thiopental Sodique Stérile, Abbott)

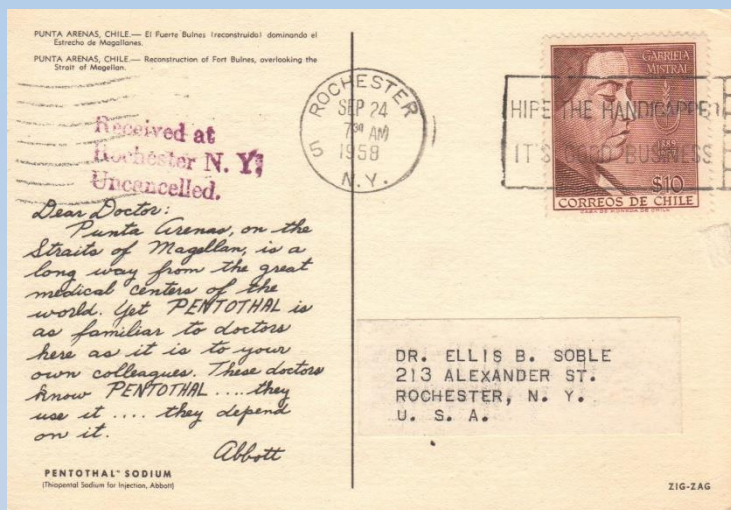
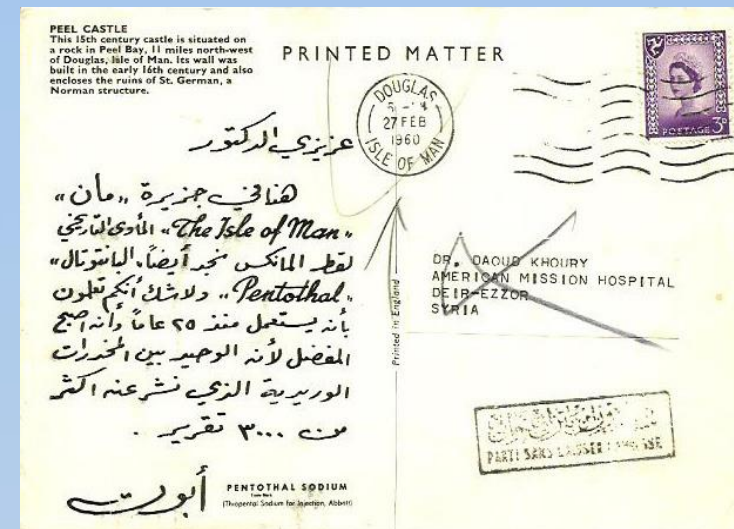
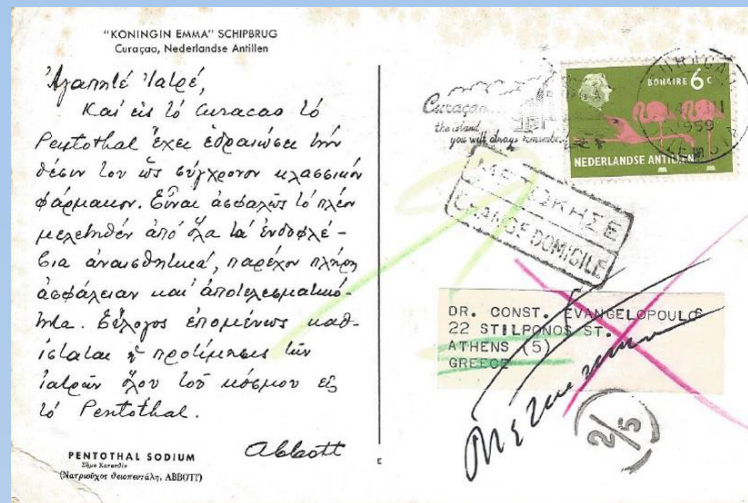
Abbott



MR. LE DR. G. PIOTROWSKI
RUE LEVRIER 9
GENEVE (GENEVE)
SWITZERLAND



As will precancel and meter collectors.



Finding postcards with auxiliary markings of any kind are a plus, especially those that can help determine how long it took a card to reach its addressee.

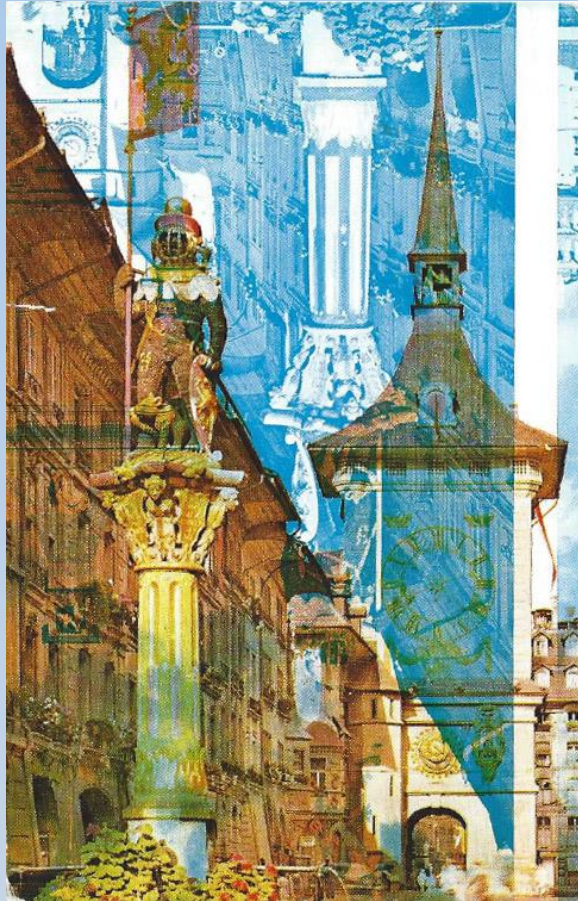


Let's summarize some of philatelic aspects to look out for...

- ➡ Stamps used
- ➡ Destination country
- ➡ Rate of the postcard mailing
- ➡ Cancellation used
- ➡ Date of the cancellation
- ➡ Auxiliary markings of any kind



Now for bloopers! Yes, even postcard printers make goofs.



Sehr geehrter Herr Doktor:
Yes, Pentothal is a favorite
here in Switzerland, too --
adding to a worldwide accept-
ance unmatched in modern
intravenous anesthesia. 2700
published reports -- and 23
years of use -- stand behind
its present unchallenged
position!

PENTOTHAL® SODIUM
(Sterile Thiopental Sodium, Abbott)

Abbott

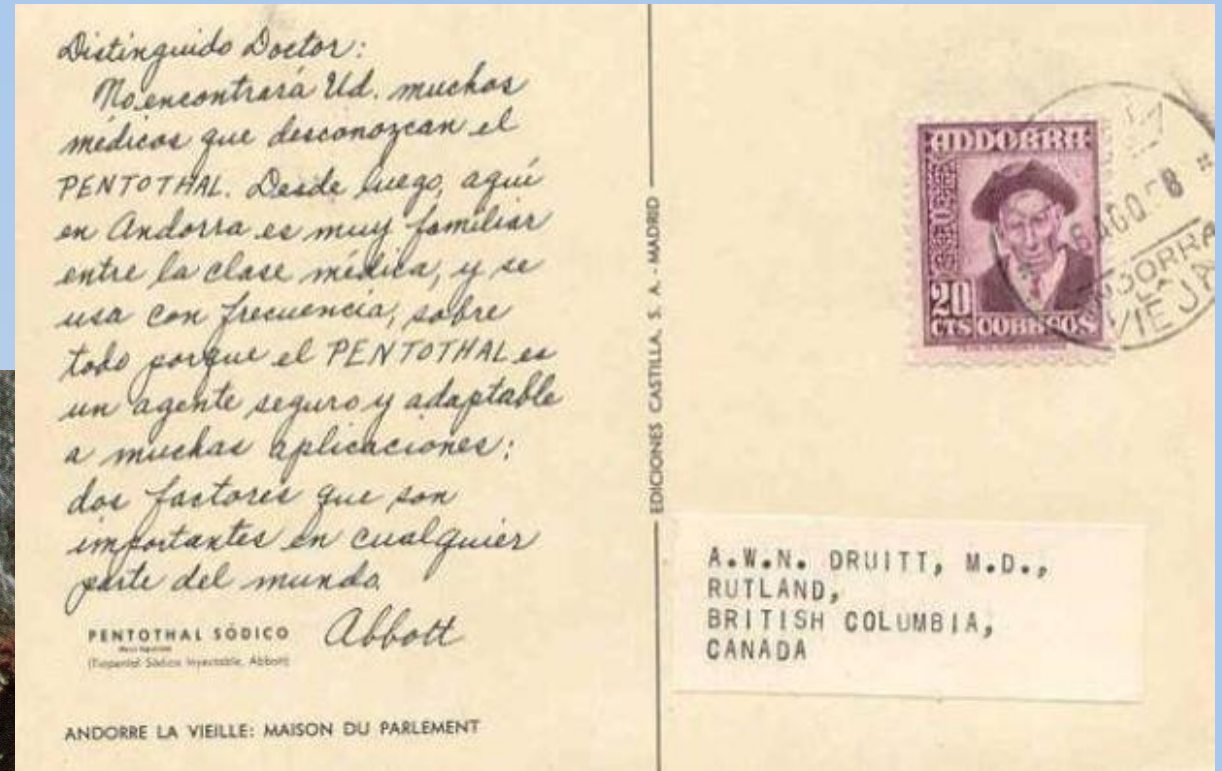
Photo Hch. Schellenberg, Zurich



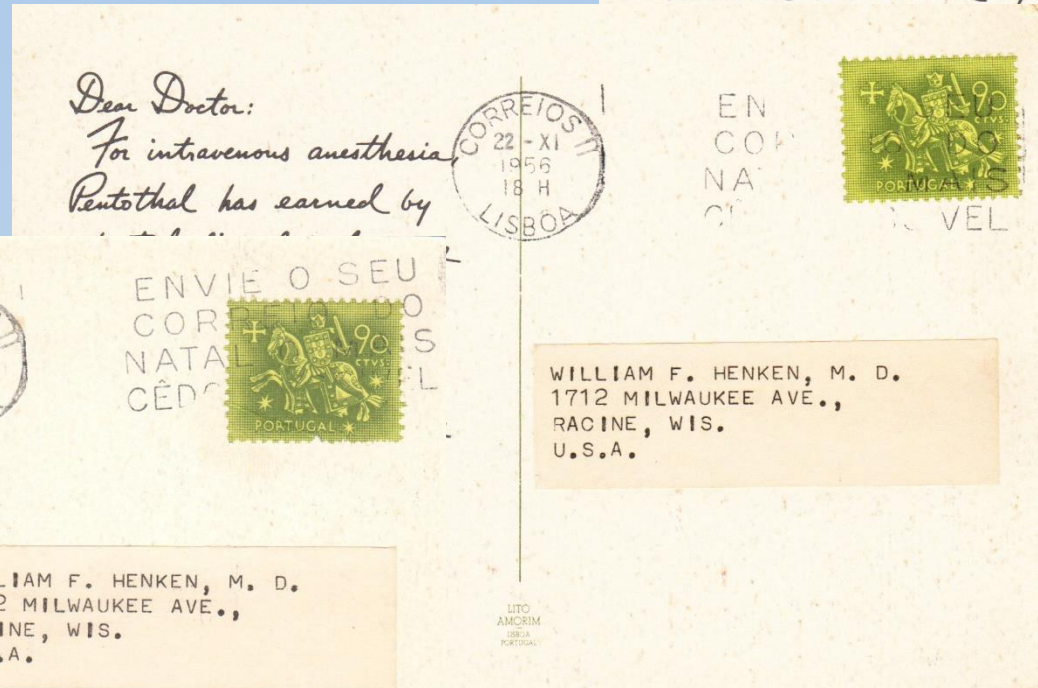
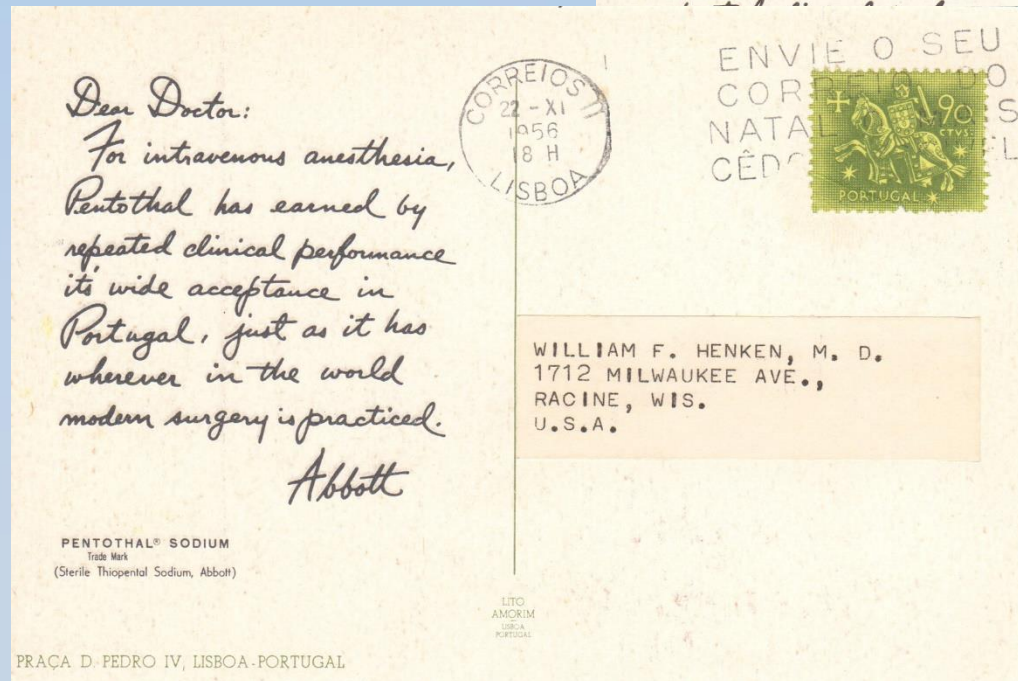
RAYMOND F. HOLDEN, JR., M.D.
BOEING AIRPLANE CO.
WICHITA 1, KANS.
U.S.A.



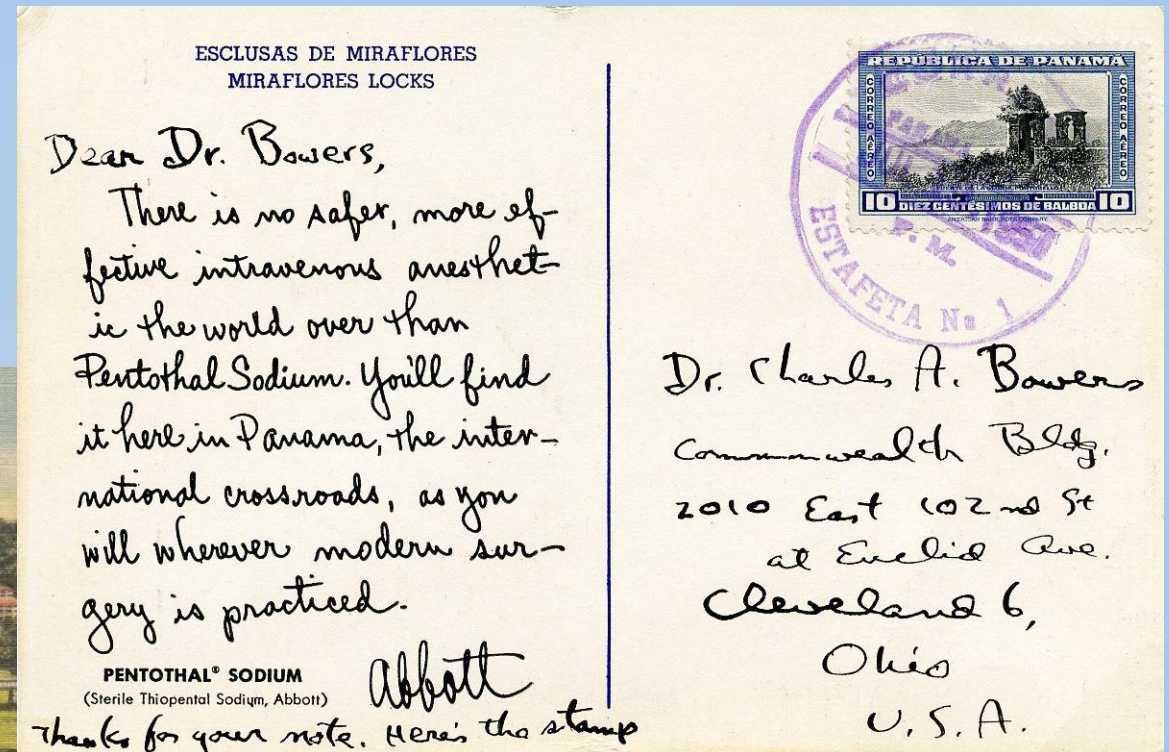
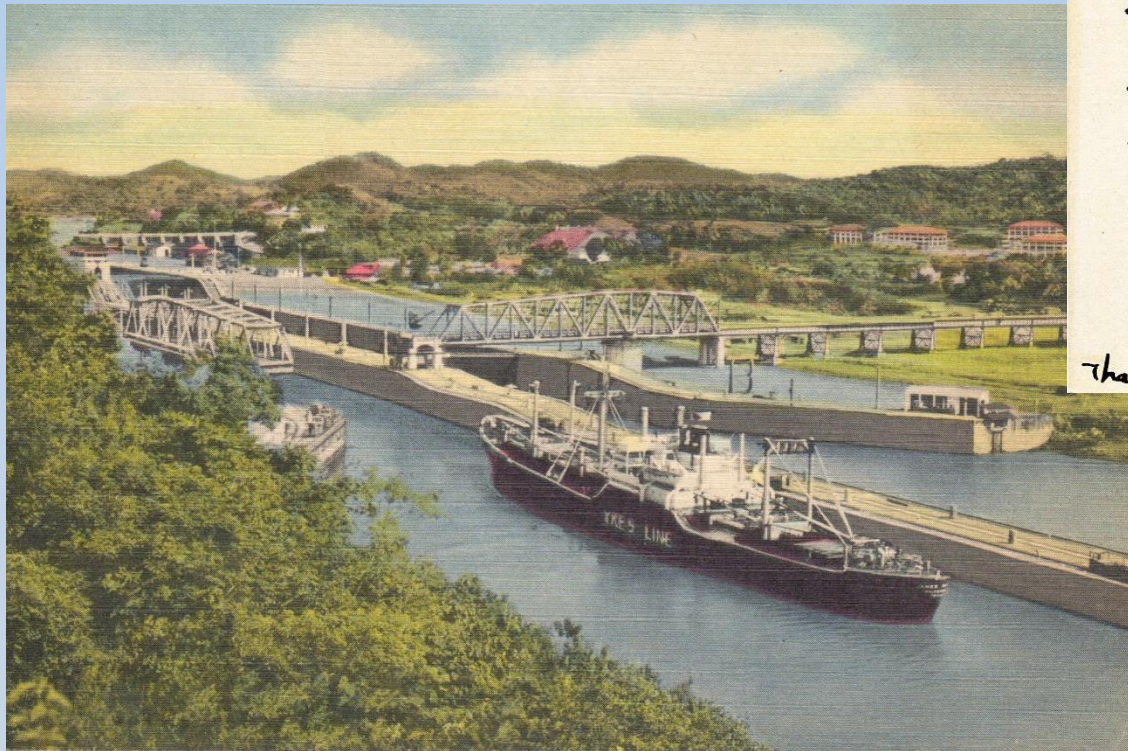
Someone mixed up western Canada with South America!

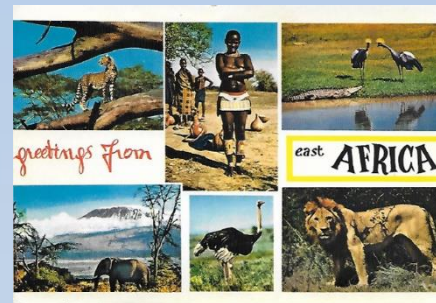
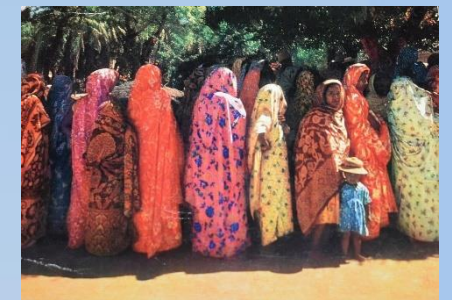
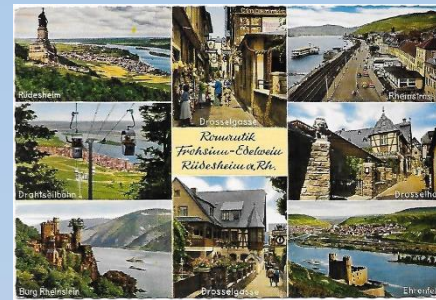
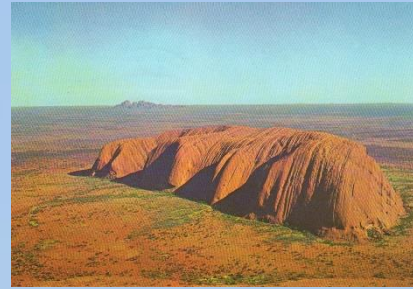
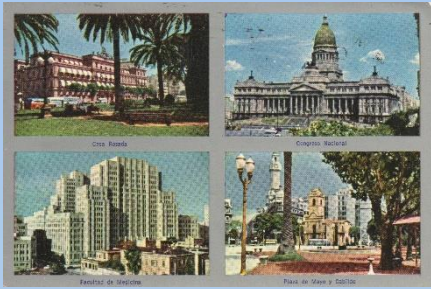


Ooops, did anyone de-dupe the mailing list? Some recipients saved everything! Note that one of these was postmarked at 9 AM and two in the same hour, 6 PM.



A favor mailing, including a handwritten tag line and address?





I hope you found this presentation interesting. Perhaps you may be the next person to get hooked on collecting “Dear Doctor” postcards! Check out the web site!

